

THE ECONOMY OF INDO-CHINA

picturesque. Everyone uses the roads, from to
peasants. The
roads have quickened their feeling of life and power.
It has
only the briefest contact with the road to dissolve the
tradition of
centuries that made for inertia, isolation, and detached
contemplation.
If the Annamite is taken more swiftly from his native
village, he can
also return there more easily. He fears journeys
less, departure
for him no longer means death. The whole country is
united by
living cordons. Products hitherto deemed unsalable
find purchasers.
A new sense of human dignity comes from this
conquest of nature
which is shared alike by those who build and those who
use the roads.
Egalitarian sentiments flourish. The Siamese are
astonished at Indo-
China's vehicular democracy which allows carts and
motor-cars to use
the same roads.

Bridges

Bridges are an expensive corollary to road and
railway construction.
Like the roads, they have had an extraordinary
influence on the
In 1897 the need was felt for a great steel bridge to
the
Red
River so as to connect Hanoi with the adjacent
provinces. This bridge,
the Pont Doumer, crossed 1,700 metres of a torrential
river
the construction both costly and hazardous. The
natives, egged on by
the *bome\$*, firmly believed that the Red River dragon
would never
permit this Occidental impiety, and the washing away
of several
pillars in the early stages of construction reinforced
this belief. The
achievement of this bridge greatly enhanced French
prestige, and
simultaneously lowered that of the local dragon.
A bridge at Hue, built at the same time* and another
at

were
the main constructions of this kind during the early
and road building in the delta regions has
made expensive by the amount of bridging
required. The con-
tinued use of the old ferries and boat transport
about the same purpose and freed some of the for
works.

Waterways

The Red River presents an hopeless
except for native craft. Increased efforts, however,
towards improving the Metroog* especially the
themselves in Laos* Toward the of the
enabled to tip the

fti*